

This letter answers a survey regarding Braille equipment and computer devices. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.101. (This is a GIL).

January 14, 2003

Dear Xxxxx:

This letter is in response to your letter received by our office on October 7, 2002. The nature of your letter and the information you have provided require that we respond with a General Information Letter, which is designed to provide general information, is not a statement of Department policy and is not binding on the Department. See 2 Ill. Adm. Code 1200.120 subsections (b) and (c), which can be found on the Department's Internet website at <http://www.revenue.state.il.us/Laws/regs/part1200/>.

In your letter, you have stated and made inquiry as follows:

We want to assure compliance with your state sales tax codes for correct collection of sales tax. Please complete the enclosed schedule indicating the taxable status of each item and return in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

We appreciate your assistance in this matter.

DEPARTMENT'S RESPONSE:

We are pleased to have the opportunity to respond to your survey, but regret that we are unable to do so in the survey format.

Equipment & accessories:

The Illinois Retailers' Occupation Tax Act imposes a tax upon persons engaged in this State in the business of selling tangible personal property to purchasers for use or consumption. See the enclosed copy of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.101. In Illinois, Use Tax is imposed on the privilege of using, in this State, any kind of tangible personal property that is purchased anywhere at retail from a retailer. See the enclosed copy of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 150.101. These taxes comprise what is commonly known as "sales" tax in Illinois. If the purchases occur in Illinois, the purchasers must pay the Use Tax to the retailer at the time of purchase. The retailers are then allowed to retain the amount of Use Tax paid to reimburse themselves for their Retailers' Occupation Tax liability incurred on those sales. If the purchases occur outside Illinois, purchasers must self assess their Use Tax liability and remit it directly to the Department. We cannot provide you with specific information about the equipment and accessories described in your survey without further information. For example,

some of the equipment and accessories could potentially qualify as a medical appliance and be subject to the low (1%) State rate of tax. See subsection (c) of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.310.

Organizations that qualify as exclusively religious, charitable, or educational can apply to the Illinois Department of Revenue to obtain tax exemption identification numbers ("E" numbers). These numbers establish that the Department recognizes said organizations as exempt from incurring Use Tax when purchasing tangible personal property in furtherance of their organizational purposes. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2007. Sales to governmental bodies are subject to tax unless the governmental body has obtained an active exemption identification number ("E" number) from the Department. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2080.

Companies selling tangible personal property to these organizations or to governmental bodies must be provided with an "E" number for sales to such organizations or governmental bodies to be tax exempt, unless another exemption can be documented. It is important to note that only sales of tangible personal property invoiced to the organization or governmental body itself are exempt. Sales made to an individual member or client of an exempt entity are generally subject to tax.

Please note that the sale of computers and communications equipment and equipment used in the diagnosis, analysis, or treatment of hospital patients is exempt when sold to lessors who lease that property under leases of one year or longer with hospitals to whom the Department has issued a tax exemption identification number. See the enclosed copy of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2011. In addition, there is also an exemption from Retailers' Occupation Tax for sales of tangible personal property to lessors who lease that property to governmental bodies under leases of one year or longer. See 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.2012.

Extended warranties:

When an item of tangible personal property is sold at retail, an express warranty from the manufacturer is often included in the selling price. This express warranty obligates the manufacturer to correct defects in materials and workmanship during a specified timeframe. When repairs are made under the terms of an express warranty, no tax is due and this is true whether the manufacturer makes the repairs or whether the manufacturer pays someone else to make the repairs. This is because the warranty (and the work to be done under the warranty) was included as part of the retail selling price of the item and, as such, was subject to Retailers' Occupation Tax and Use Tax when the item was sold at retail. See subsection (b) of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.141.

Extended warranties are contracts to provide repairs for a particular item for a stated period of time after a manufacturer's express warranty has expired. An extended warranty is not included in the selling price of the item covered by the extended warranty and, for that reason, the selling price of the extended warranty is not subject to Retailers' Occupation Tax and Use Tax liability when the item is sold at retail. However, tangible personal property transferred incident to the completion of an extended warranty will result in Use Tax liability by a serviceman based on the cost price of that tangible personal property. See subsection (b)(3) of the enclosed copy of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.301 and subsection (b) of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.141.

Labor – installation, installation travel, training repairs & repair parts:

For situations involving express or extended warranties, please see the discussion above. Illinois Retailers' Occupation and Use Taxes do not apply to sales of service that do not involve the transfer of tangible personal property to customers. However, if tangible personal property is transferred incident to sales of service, this will result in either Service Occupation Tax liability or Use

Tax liability for the servicemen depending upon his activities. For your general information we are enclosing copies of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.101 through 140.109 regarding sales of service and Service Occupation Tax.

Under the Service Occupation Tax Act, businesses providing services (i.e. servicemen) are taxed on tangible personal property transferred as an incident to sales of service. See the enclosed copy of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.101. The purchase of tangible personal property that is transferred to the service customer may result in either Service Occupation Tax liability or Use Tax liability for the servicemen depending upon his activities. The serviceman's liability may be calculated in one of four ways: (1) separately stated selling price of tangible personal property transferred incident to service; (2) 50% of the servicemen's entire bill; (3) Service Occupation Tax on the servicemen's cost price if the servicemen are registered de minimis servicemen; or (4) Use Tax on the servicemen's cost price if the servicemen are de minimis and are not otherwise required to be registered under Section 2a of the Retailers' Occupation Tax Act.

Using the first method, servicemen may separately state the selling price of each item transferred as a result of the sale of service. The tax is then calculated on the separately stated selling price of the tangible personal property transferred. If the servicemen do not separately state the selling price of the tangible personal property transferred, they must use 50% of the entire bill to the service customer as the tax base. Both of the above methods provide that in no event may the tax base be less than the servicemen's cost price of the tangible personal property transferred. See the enclosed copy of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.106.

The third way servicemen may account for their tax liability only applies to de minimis servicemen who have either chosen to be registered or are required to be registered because they incur Retailers' Occupation Tax liability with respect to a portion of their business. See the enclosed copy of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.109. Servicemen may qualify as de minimis if they determine that the annual aggregate cost price of tangible personal property transferred as an incident of the sale of service is less than 35% of the total annual gross receipts from service transactions (75% in the case of pharmacists and persons engaged in graphics arts production). Servicemen no longer have the option of determining whether they are de minimis using a transaction by transaction basis. Registered de minimis servicemen are authorized to pay Service Occupation Tax (which includes local taxes) based upon their cost price of tangible personal property transferred incident to the sale of service. Such servicemen should give suppliers resale certificates and remit Service Occupation Tax using the Service Occupation Tax rates for their locations. Such servicemen also collect a corresponding amount of Service Use Tax from their customers, absent an exemption.

The final method of determining tax liability may be used by de minimis servicemen that are not otherwise required to be registered under Section 2a of the Retailers' Occupation Tax Act. Such de minimis servicemen handle their tax liability by paying Use Tax to their suppliers. If their suppliers are not registered to collect and remit tax, the servicemen must register, self-assess and remit Use Tax to the Department. The servicemen are considered to be the end-users of the tangible personal property transferred incident to service. Consequently, they are not authorized to collect a "tax" from the service customers. See the enclosed copy of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 140.108.

Computer software & upgrades:

Generally, sales of "canned" computer software are taxable retail sales in Illinois. However, if the computer software consists of custom computer programs, then the sales of such software may not be taxable retail sales. See subsection (c) of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.1935. Sales of software are

taxable regardless of the means of delivery. For instance, the transfer or sale of canned computer software downloaded electronically would be taxable.

Custom computer programs or software are prepared to the special order of the customer. The selection of pre-written or canned programs assembled by vendors into software packages does not constitute custom software unless real and substantial changes are made to the programs or creation of program interfacing logic. See subsection (c)(3) of Section 130.1935.

If transactions for the licensing of computer software meet all of the criteria provided in subsection (a)(1) of Section 130.1935, neither the transfer of the software or the subsequent software updates will be subject to Retailers' Occupation Tax. A license of software is not a taxable retail sale if:

- A) It is evidenced by a written agreement signed by the licensor and the customer;
- B) It restricts the customer's duplication and use of the software;
- C) It prohibits the customer from licensing, sublicensing or transferring the software to a third party (except to a related party) without the permission and continued control of the licensor;
- D) The licensor has a policy of providing another copy at minimal or no charge if the customer loses or damages the software, or permitting the licensee to make and keep an archival copy, and such policy is either stated in the license agreement, supported by the licensor's books and records, or supported by a notarized statement made under penalties of perjury by the licensor; and
- E) The customer must destroy or return all copies of the software to the licensor at the end of the license period. This provision is deemed to be met, in the case of a perpetual license, without being set forth in the license agreement.

Charges for updates of canned software are fully taxable pursuant to Section 130.1935. If the updates qualify as custom software under subsection (c) of Section 130.1935, they may not be taxable. But, if maintenance agreements provide for updates of canned software, and the charges for those updates are not separately stated and taxed, then the whole agreement would be taxable as sales of canned software.

Shipping & handling:

For your information and reference regarding the taxation of transportation and delivery charges under the Retailers' Occupation Tax Act, see 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.415. As noted in the regulation, transportation and delivery charges, also designated as shipping and handling charges, are not taxable if it can be shown that the charges are agreed to separately from the selling price of the property and the charges are actually reflective of the costs of shipping. To the extent the transportation and delivery charges exceed the costs of shipping, the charges will be subject to tax.

If, however, the transportation and delivery charges are included in the selling price of the property sold, then the charges are an element of the cost to the seller and are not deducted by the seller when computing Retailers' Occupation Tax liability. See subsection (c) of 86 Ill. Adm. Code 130.415. Furthermore, transportation or delivery charges that are incurred by the seller in acquiring tangible personal property for sale are merely costs of doing business and are also

not deductible when computing the seller's Retailers' Occupation Tax liability, regardless of the fact that the seller passes such costs on to the customer by quoting and billing such costs separately from the selling price of the property being sold. See subsection (e) of Section 130.415.

I hope this information is helpful. The Department of Revenue maintains a website, which can be accessed at www.revenue.state.il.us. If you have further questions related to the Illinois sales tax laws, please contact the Department's Taxpayer Information Division at (217) 782-3336.

If you are not under audit and you wish to obtain a binding Private Letter Ruling regarding your factual situation, please submit all of the information set out in items 1 through 8 of Section 1200.110(b) described above.

Very truly yours,

Terry D. Charlton
Associate Counsel

TDC:msk
Enc.